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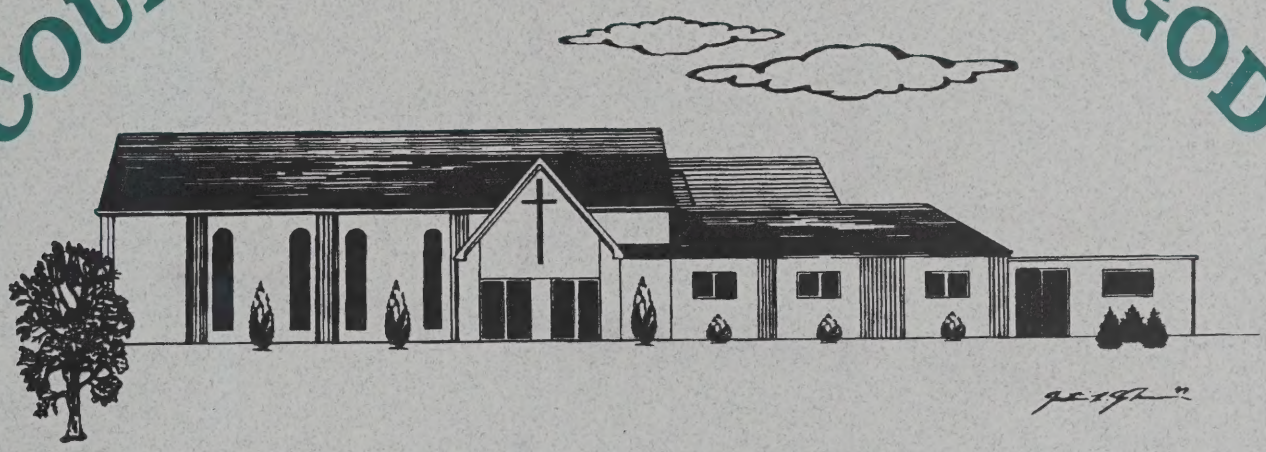
COUNTY LINE CHURCH OF GOD



1897-1997

Celebrating 100 Years Together

Allen-DeKalb County Line Road, Auburn, IN 46706
219-627-2482

County Line Church of God...

...is an independent body of believers, associated with the Church of God movement with headquarters in Anderson, Indiana. Through the years to the present, the church has emphasized open fellowship to all who are followers of Christ. Individuals who attend are encouraged to surrender their lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom revealed in the Word of God.

County Line Church of God is voluntarily associated with a state organization for purposes of planting new churches. National cooperative efforts include Anderson College, Mid-America Bible College, Warner Pacific College, various world mission organizations and the Warner Press publishing house, producers of the magazine "Vital Christianity."

The present pastor, Al Black, refers to his role as "pastor/teacher." Bob Herman is the associate pastor, Dane Kruse the youth minister and John Molin, Ph. D. is pastor of counseling.

W.E. Bailey

age 16 years

The Church's History

It was in the fall of 1890 that a tired young man came trudging down the Allen-DeKalb County line road looking for work. In a woods at the side of the road were two farmers cutting fire wood for winter. The young man stopped to talk with the farmers, and they hired him to help cut wood and do chores. The young man's name was Ed Bailey. The two farmers were David and Eli Gerig.

As soon as Ed began his new duties, he began to distribute Christian literature and talking freely about God. Although this provoked ridicule from the local farmers, Ed's enthusiasm was not dampened. He even sent for an evangelist, C.E. Orr, and arranged for a revival meeting in the Brush College School.

Brother Orr, as all ministers were called at that time, had been a teacher in Federalsburg, Maryland. He felt God was calling him to preach the gospel, so he sold his farms and began his ministry.

He preached at Brush College a few nights, and there were several conversions. Someone gave him $1.50, and he left and never returned.

After those meetings, the school was used as a meeting place for the church until it was closed by the school board. The small group of converts then began meeting in the homes of Wesley Warner and David Gerig.

Noah, Eli & David Gerig

David & Eli were pastors 1896

Brush College School

Located on Garman Road - First meeting place

An outdoor meeting was held in a grove on the Alex Warner farm one summer in 1897. Poles were nailed together and branches laid across them to make a pulpit and to provide a "brush arbor" shelter for the speaker.

People sat under the shade of the trees on seats made by boards laid across logs as they listened to the messages of Mother Smith, who stated in her life-story that when God sanctified her she received "the boldness of a lion and the meekness of a lamb." Her powerful messages had a lasting influence on many in the congregation.

Saint's Meeting House

Built on northeast corner of Gerig farm

Church meeting at Brush College School

County Line Church of God has a colorful history. It began with the meeting together of three men, who were dedicated to establishing a church in their rural locale.

Ed Bailey and David Gerig began meeting in 1896 at Eli Gerig's house, just west of the church's present location. They called it "The Saints' Church."

Their membership increased, and soon a building was necessary to accommodate their number. In 1903, the group acquired enough land to build a new meeting house, using timber from the land for the structure. The church they built is the site of the present Youth Room. Charles Hartung was the first formal pastor. Other men, including David and Eli Gerig, had previously filled that office.

In 1910, the name of the church was changed to the "Brush College Church of God," after a school of that name located just south of the church. A basement was added to the church building in 1936 for more space.

Photo taken on north side of Brush College Church

Same doors open to youth room today

John Freehafer came from Huntington to instruct new converts. In the large parlor of Eli Gerig's house, the group held Sunday morning and evening services, and prayer meetings on Wednesday nights.

Following the conversion of Eli and Matilda Gerig in 1902, the group held services in the parlor of their home. Several new converts were in need of sound Bible teaching, instruction in Christian living and encouragement.

All were found in Brother and Sister Freehafer, laymen of a church in Huntington. They drove a horse and buggy 45 miles each way to minister to the young Christians. Together, the group would read and discuss the Bible, sing songs of faith and courage and pray together, enabling them to grow and become established in their new-found experience in Christ.

Years before the conversion of Eli and Matilda, Joseph Gerig, Eli's father had said, "I would like to have church on the corner of my farm." His dream was fulfilled when Eli Gerig donated the northeast corner of his farm for a place to erect the "Saint's Meeting House." David and Eli cut down timber from the farm, hauled it to the lumber mill and hauled it back again so members of the congregation could use it to build their meeting house.

In 1903, Charles Hartung moved with his family from Kosciusko, along with his parents, Louis and Kate Hartung. Their house was on the County Line road, three miles west of the new meeting house. Brother Hartung soon became the church's pastor, staying from 1904 to 1924.

Brother Hartung preached twice on Sunday, led the singing and taught singing classes during the week. He had been a music major at Valparaiso College and had taught school in Kosciusko County beginning at age 14. His job description included firing the two pot-bellied stoves that heated the building.

During the 20 years of his pastorate, he received no salary and little expense allowance from the church. No offerings were received at that time, and the offering box attached to the back wall of the church with a slit in the top received little notice.

During the winter of 1904, Barney Warren and Charles Naylor held a revival meeting at the church in the middle of a snowstorm, which became so severe that many of the congregation were unable to return to their homes.

Around 1911, the F.G. Smith family came, with Emma Winterlee Burgess, to hold a four-week revival. Many of the young people of the church and community were converted during their meetings. Emma started the young people's meetings, using F.G. Smith's book, "What the Bible Teaches." Artie Weller was the first youth leader.

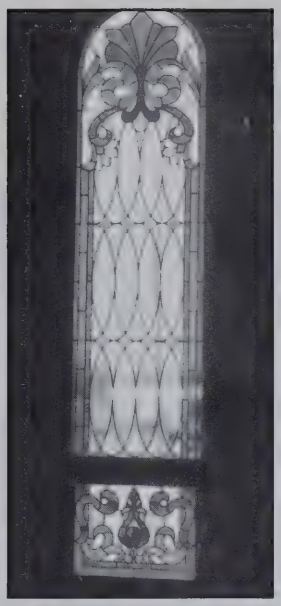
Other evangelists had come to Brush College Church to hold meetings before Brother Smith's arrival. Among them were Otto Bolds, John L. Williams, and N.S. Duncan, who often spent the weekend at Eli Gerig's house. They made several contributions to the growth of the church, and many people drove for miles by horse and buggy to attend the meetings.

Early 1960's photo of County Line Church of God

In 1957, the name was changed again to "County Line Church of God," to better identify its location in the community. And in 1963, continued growth led to the building of a new sanctuary. The contemporary style sanctuary was erected for $59,500, which had a seating capacity of 235. Additional Sunday School classrooms were added on in 1971.

Additional real estate was purchased in 1974 in anticipation of future growth, and twelve years later, the church voted to proceed with a building expansion program. In 1987, the congregation approved a capital fund-raising campaign to begin the construction of a new sanctuary.

New sanctuary added in 1963



Stained glass window in newest addition Designed & fabricated by Renee Moreland (descendent of Gerig family) & Don Muckenfuss

Building Committee - 1963 Project

Front row: Bill Howey, Beryl Howey, Lila Springer, Paul Whittington
2nd row: Earl Schowe, Bill Romine, Norman Gerig, Dean Kruse, Richard Hartung - Back row: Miles Weller, Ralph Saylor

Interior of new sanctuary 1963

Three daughters of Ed Bailey attend services at County Line

left to right: Pastor Al Black, Pauline Raines, Ruth Peterson, Grace Palmer

Groundbreaking for latest expansion 1988

Pastors of County Line

Nellie Hawkins Morrison
Pastor of church 1928-1931

Von Chesterman Family
Pastor 1936-1945
Omer Chesterman, Erna Mae,
Marlene Kay & Rev. & Mrs. Chesterman

Rev. & Mrs. Ward Jackson (Florence)
Pastor 1945-1948

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Acts 20:28

Rev. Peter J. Klassen (Adeline)
Pastor 1957-1961

Church of God 1896-1997

Rev. William Jeffries (Ann) Family

Pastor 1961-1966

William Jenkins

Pastor 1934-1936

Pastor Al & Annie Black

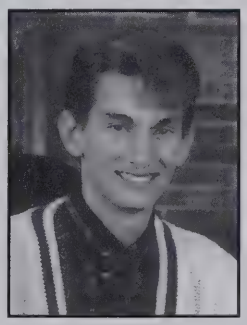
Pastor 1980-present

Pastors of the County Line Church of God 1896-1997

1. David Gerig	1896
2. Eli Gerig	1896
3. C. E. Orr	1896
4. John Freehafer	1897
5. Charles Hartung	1903
6. William Ramey	1925
7. Nellie Hawkins Morrison	1928
8. Sanford F. Williams	1931
9. William Jenkins	1934
10. Von Chesterman	1936
11. Ward Jackson	1945
12. William Eddy	1948
13. Samuel & Mrs. Dooty	1953
14. Alvin Beggs	1954
15. Peter Klassen	1957
16. William Jeffries	1961
17. Ronald Crump	1966
18. Gerald Pirkey	1971
19. John R. Johnson	1973
20. Mickey Kennedy	1978
21. Al Black	1980

Bob Herman

Associate Pastor
1989-present



Dane Kruse

Youth Pastor
1997

John Molin

Counseling Pastor

Rhoda Springer

Office Manager

First Bible School - July 3, 1947

Under direction of Florence Jackson

Windows of old church (west side) are original

Stained glass windows were later donated by Bertha Chausee
in memory of her parents Bert & Mae Akey

Bible School - 1992

One of first Vacation Bible Schools

Teacher Marcella (Schlatter) Fuller
in back row - 1948

"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 19:14

WCG Supports Mission Work

1952 WCG Meeting

1959 State WCG Retreat

Old Tabernacle - Yellow Creek Lake
left to right: Adeline Klassen, Marcella Fuller, Lila Springer, Louise Weller, Goldie Saylor

1965 WCG Meeting

front row: Jean Surface, Marcella Fuller, Louise Weller
back row: Beryl Howey, Mary Howey, Maxine Romine, Ruth Wertman, Lila Springer, Mary Lou Gerig

Eunice Zehr

Longtime
WCG member

left to right: Jean Surface, Mabel Souder (Missionary to Africa), Lola Schlatter, Lila Springer

Quilt Making Day

Esther Porter, Laura Wertman, Ruth Wertman, Louise Weller, Marcia Weller

County Line Mission Projects

Project Partner - Marla McKown
Greg & Gail Bratton - Sea Angel, Costa Rica
Alan & Kris Steiner - Frontiers, Indonesia
Frank Waggoner - Brazil
Laura Coe - Uganda
Will & Patsy Kline - Brazil
Handley Family - Pine Crest
Stauffer Family - Pine Crest
Co. Line Youth Missions
Youth for Christ
Child Evangelism
Wycliff Bible Translators
Far East Broadcasting
Operation Shelter
Good Samaritan Center
Angel Tree
Turning Point
Rojas
Co. Line Work Camps
Barb Shaffer - Japan
Mabel Souder
Amanda Ricketts - Kenya
Tom & Jean McCracken - Brazil
Maurice & Dondeena Caldwell - Mexico
LaBuena Terra Bible Institute
Matthew Kruse - IBLP Russia
Faith Promise
Genovieva Sfatou - Rumania
Hope Hill Children's Home - Kentucky
Heide Froemke
Indiana Kingdom Builders
Christ Birthday Offering
Penny-a-day
Linen Chest
Yellow Creek Lake Campground
Korea Evangelism
Gift Box for Missions
Bandages for Cancer patients
Flood of 1982
RJ & Elizabeth Philip - India
Sidney & Jean Johnson - Thailand
Christmas Prayer Vigil
Kevin Schwiegger - Athletes in Action

Al, Kris, Joel, Luke & Lauren Steiner

Frontiers Missions - Indonesia

Tom & Jean McCracken

Missionaries to N.E. Brazil

Will & Patsy Kline

Missionaries to Brazil

Laura Coe

Career Missionary to Uganda
Family nurse practitioner

Mabel Rose

Child Evangelism
Missionary to Australia

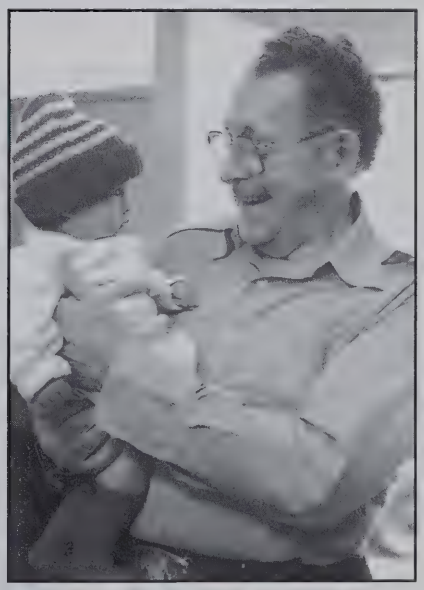
"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:"

Colossians 1:5-6

Whitney, Kim, Logan & Kevin Schwieger

Athletes in Action Mission

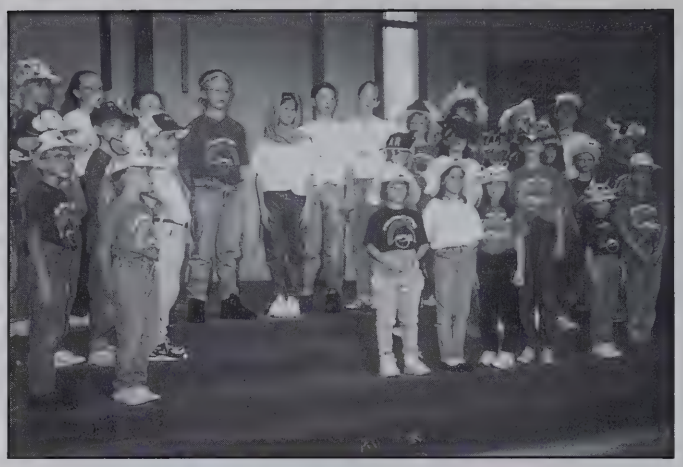


Frank Waggoner

Missionary - Guatemala

Sunday School

Early '70's class led by Jackie Gruber



Kids Music Camps

Junior Church

Nila Fuller tells story to children

Fern & Joyce Saltsman

Fern has taught Sunday School since 1936

Kids Handbell Choirs

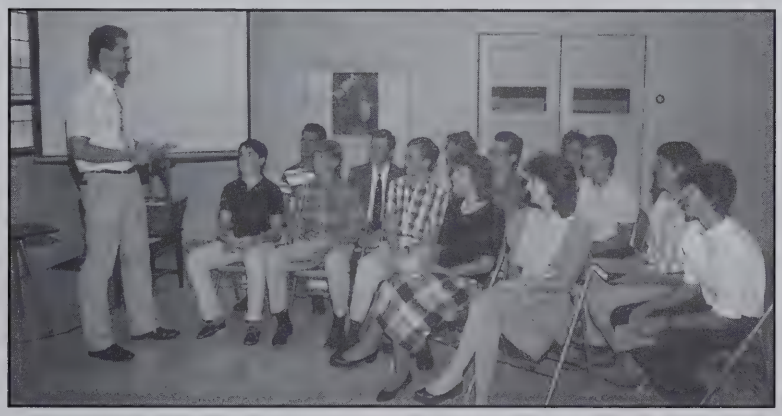
Kids Choirs

1971 Youth Retreat

left to right front row: Rex Fuller,
Julie Watson, Becky Weller, Brian Springer
back row: Chris Harkless,
Marcia Wertman, Diana Smith

Dirk McKown & Shannon Kruse

front row:
Renee Moreland, Mitchell Kruse
back row:
Dan Wertman, Rob Moreland
1970's



Sunday School class led by Bob Herman

Youth Christmas Party

Kouples Klub

Working Together

Billie Romine & Dave Ashenfelter

Men's Softball Team

Christmas Caroling

1997 League Champion

Women's Softball Team
Captain - Stuart Kruse

Pokagon Sunday

Adult Handbell Choir

Worship Team Leader

Marna Handley

Adult Choir - 1990

Special Music

Marcia Weller & Kay Kruse - 1988

"Resurrection"

Scene from Easter Production

Reflecting on 100 Years

from Pastor Al Black

"Make an ark of cypress wood, Noah," said God. "And bring into the ark two of all living creatures." Genesis 8:22 reports that "Noah did everything just as God commanded him." I'm convinced that when Noah obeyed God's odd command to build a boat in the middle of a desert, Noah had not the foggiest notion what impact his obedience would have a hundred years later.

"Leave your country, Abram," said God. "And go to a land I will show you." Genesis 12:4 reports to us, "So Abram left, as the Lord told him."

Abram, later called Abraham, had no clue as to what the long range result of his obedience would be, say in a hundred years.

"Go to the great city of Nineveh, Jonah," said God. "And proclaim to it the message I give you." After the great fish burped Jonah up on the beach, Jonah 3:3 gives up this report. "Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord."

Do you think Jonah had any concept of the effect his obedience would have a hundred years afterward?

When Ed Bailey slogged through the muddy ruts of the County Line Road back in 1896, I wonder what command God had given him to obey. In my imagination I can hear God say to him, "Go, Ed, and make disciples of David and Eli Gerig in the boonies south of Auburn."

The spoken and written history of our congregations reports to us that Ed Bailey obeyed what God must have commanded him. No doubt Bailey had very little, if any, vision of the impact his obedience would have a hundred years down the road.

Because of the obedience of Ed Bailey and the Gerigs, here we are. A congregation of five or six hundred (If everybody who calls County Line "home" would show up the same Sunday.) A congregation committed to God and loving and serving one another. A congregation of believers who are willing to obey God's command to reach out and touch.

Have you ever pondered the question of what things will be like around here in another century? We certainly have a rich godly heritage behind us.

In a profound way, I hear the inaudible voice of God saying, "County Line congregation, I have brought you this far. And it is good. Continue to love Me. Continue to love one another. Surge forward with My ministries. Convey to your children the Biblical principles that have made you a great body of believers in My Son, Jesus."

Then with Noah, Abraham, Jonah, Ed Bailey and the multitudes who have been obedient before us...I'm convinced that the County Line Church of God will be alive and thriving in the year 2097.

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